

If you had asked me about my future 8 years ago, I never would have imagined that I would be a university graduate, of course I had dreams about going to university and studying further but for a girl like me it seemed almost impossible.

I come from a family that values education but have never been offered the opportunity; I am the first to get a degree in my family. I would be lying if I said this journey was easy, after doing my matric I was certain that I wanted to study dramatic arts and when that didn't happen it felt like my world was coming to an end. I thank God every day that I had the support of 18twenty8, which I was introduced to by Refiloe Seseane who I met in 2009 while I was doing Matric.

18twenty8 helped me get a job in 2010 during my gap year where I found my true passion of becoming a teacher. I worked as a facilitator and actress at Themba Interactive Theatre (Themba) in Braamfontein, where we would perform and educate learners about HIV/AIDS in different schools.

Though I had an income and was quite comfortable working at Themba, Refiloe ensured that I didn't lose focus of where I wanted to go in life. We applied at the University of Johannesburg for me to study education in 2011, I was accepted but that was just the beginning of what was to follow. My family and I had no idea who was going to pay for my registration or fees, we didn't know who would buy my textbooks, pay for my accommodation or support me financially in my four years at UJ but we were certain about one thing, I was going to start school in February 2011.

I remember driving with Refiloe in the car one day, she told us that she had been approached by a bank I had never heard of before. She told us to write a letter stating why we deserved a bursary and how it would improve our lives. That one letter made a huge difference in my life; it brought me a sense of hope again.

There are so many girls in South Africa who are from the same or a very similar background like the one I come from but there are not many opportunities given to them. From the moment I met Refiloe and when I got the bursary from Deutsche Bank my life changed. I knew for a fact that I had become more than just a statistic of the many uneducated or unemployed young people in this country. I went through four years of Varsity, not once did I feel any pressure of getting support from an older man like many first year university girls do because I was taken care of in every way possible. My fees were paid in full every year, I had textbooks, I had a laptop from my first year and I was living in a safe and secure area, I got a tablet, there was no difference between me and a person who comes from a "wealthy" background, I really was living the dream...

To the young girls who are in high school or who may have just written their last matric paper, I would say that clichéd as this may be but dreams do come true, it doesn't take much to ask for help, and as my mom always says an educated person has unlimited options in life, one goes further with a degree than without.

I have not made it yet, my story is still being written but I am much further than I would have been if I thought I could have done this all on my own. I am eternally grateful to each and every person who has played a part in making my dreams come true so far.

Deutsche Bank has made a lasting difference, not only in my life but in the lives of the generation that will come after me; I look forward to paying it forward. I am excited about what the future has in store for me, looking at my journey so far I know it can only be good things.

A BIG Thank you to Deutsche Bank and thank you again 18twenty8 - you have changed my life, and I pray that God gives you the strength to change the lives of others...